

SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK

with Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

Showing Our Critics How to Fix a Broken World

There are critics of Judaism who argue that the Jewish Bible is full of irrelevant laws and regulations which do not advance a relationship with God.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

This false argument is dispelled by the book of Deuteronomy, which many consider the

most spiritual book of the Torah.

In the coming weeks, we will encounter passages that explain the nature of God's absolute Oneness. Other passages will explain how finite beings can achieve a personal relationship with our Infinite Creator.

These fundamentals of belief are the tools God provided the Jewish people before they entered the land of Israel.

It is these beliefs, along with our trust in God, that continually ensure the survival of the Jewish people, especially in difficult times.

Nonetheless, this week's Torah portion Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22), seemingly focuses on something very different.

Rather than launching into spiritual motifs, the beginning of the fifth book of the Torah recounts the many challenges the Jewish people encountered during their 40-year journey in the Sinai desert.

However, overcoming challenges is a preparation for achieving a spiritual connection with God. Challenges humble our spirit and strengthen our character, thereby making us a proper vessel to experience spirituality.

Contrary to what our detractors say, the commandments of the Torah are the connection between us and our Creator. This is alluded to in the word mitzvah

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which, in addition to meaning a commandment, is related to the Aramaic word “tzavta,” which means a connection.

Another lesson concerning connecting to God is found in the Haftora [Prophetic reading] associated with this week’s Torah reading.

After reproving the Jewish people, Isaiah advises: *“Learn to do good. Devote yourselves to justice; Aid the wronged. Uphold the rights of the orphan. Fight for the rights of widows.”* Then he powerfully proclaims: *“Zion will be redeemed by justice; and those who return, with righteousness [tzedakah]”* (Isaiah 1:17; 1:27).

The word tzedakah also means charity, and it is acts of justice, righteousness, and charity that give our lives purpose and will hasten the ultimate redemption.

In our day and age, we are witnessing a decline in civility and the rule of law. To counteract this we need to redirect ourselves and society to focus on acts of kindness and charity.

By doing this, we can fix a broken world and achieve a more meaningful, healthy, and spiritual life.

In addition to “repairing the world,” King David told us that charity [the act of giving to others] is a means to experience a personal relationship with God, as it says, *“by giving charity, I perceive God’s countenance”* (Psalm 17:15).

May this Shabbos provide the opportunity and inspiration to participate in the journey of transforming the world into a kinder and more spiritual place, one step at a time.

Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi Bentzion Kravitz

**We are
witnessing a
decline in
civility and the
rule of law.**

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